

Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce

Testimony on HB2

Appropriations Bill for Montana University System

Date: February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007

Testimonial By: Teresa A. Olds, President/CEO Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce

I am pleased to be here today to testify on behalf of MSU Great Falls College of Technology.

MSU Great Falls College of Technology offers our market higher education opportunities that are extremely valuable to our community. Great Falls is currently positioned for further growth and development and is on the verge of many great things. The continued funding for higher education is crucial to our community.

I have been witness to the rapid response by the MSU Great Falls College of Technology in addressing workforce needs within our community. The efforts by the administration to provide local businesses with workforce training has been nothing but impressive. Without their assistance, training and facilities – the only outcome would be continued workforce bleed detrimental to our future growth.

MSU Great Falls College of Technology has been a great partner with the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce. We have worked together for two years to bring, develop and implement the Business Expansion and Retention Program aka BEAR. BEAR is an important part of the Economic Development process, one in which Great Falls has put high on their agenda. Great Falls is very fortunate to have the Great Falls Development Authority Director, Brett Doney, whom realizes the value to the BEAR program. While Mr. Doney is working to recruit Primary Sector business, we, The Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and MSU Great Falls College of Technology can assist the Great Falls Development Authority by focusing on growth, wealth creation and expansion capabilities within our homegrown businesses that were incubated and grown in Montana. MSU Great Falls College of Technology will be fundamental in this process through BEAR. Without the MSU Great Falls College of Technology stepping up to the plate to partner with us; we would not have been able to get the BEAR program off the ground.

Therefore, as you can see, HB2 is of utmost importance to MSU Great Falls College of Technology and the community of Great Falls.

Thank you for your time.

***Business vitality is our job.***